

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003647

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: A DPP PERSPECTIVE ON TAIWAN ETHNIC POLITICS

REF: TAIPEI 3604

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary: The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) believes it could benefit in the December legislative election from its efforts to define and build a Taiwan identity that is "multi-cultural," and it aims to broaden the appeal of the DPP beyond its traditional ethnic Taiwanese base of support. Long seen by the Taiwan electorate as a party representing primarily ethnic Taiwanese (benshengren) interests, the DPP is increasingly trying to appeal to Hakka and Aborigine minorities. DPP outreach to the Hakka and Aborigine populations -- estimated at 22 per cent of Taiwan's total population -- were effective in garnering support for President Chen Shui-bian during the presidential elections this spring. DPP officials say their party continues to make inroads into the grass-roots organizations of these minority ethnic groups that traditionally had been heavily pro-Kuomintang (KMT) and are projecting that the DPP will expand its support in those constituencies. Most DPP strategists, however, are content with playing the Taiwanese versus Mainlander ethnic card and painting the opposition Pan-Blue camp, especially the People First Party (PFP), as dominated by Mainlander Chinese. End Summary.

Building a Taiwan Identity for "Everyone"

12. (C) DPP Director for Ethnic Affairs Yang Chang-cheng told AIT on November 8 that President Chen articulated in his May 20 and October 10 speeches a vision for a more open, tolerant, and unified society with deeper roots in Taiwan. Chen's aim, according to Yang, is to lay a foundation from which to reconstruct Taiwan's national identity. Yang asserted that such a project will entail redefining Chinese culture and its role within a new Taiwan national identity. He said one of the key challenges would be going beyond the narrow vision many Taiwanese intellectuals present of an ethnic Taiwanese-centric identity and to avoid continuing to alienate ethnic Mainlanders from the DPP cause.

Wooing the Hakka Vote

13. (C) The more pragmatic side of the DPP offers a vision of a "multi-ethnic" Taiwan identity in order to expand the DPP's appeal to Taiwan's Hakka population, which comprises about 20 percent of the island's inhabitants and is key to the DPP's efforts to build a lasting majority. Yang said that that DPP expects to pick up 30 to 40 percent of the Hakka vote in Taoyuan, Hsinchu, and Miaoli counties where Hakka make up 40, 70, and 67 percent of the population, respectively. He projected that support levels for DPP candidates as a whole in these areas are unlikely to exceed the 40 percent mark reached in the 2004 presidential election. Yang attributed growing DPP support among Hakka communities to the extensive attention President Chen has paid to promoting Hakka issues and interests, both at the local and national level, such as the promotion of Hakka language, television shows, and cultural activities. Hakka leaders have been "pleasantly surprised" with Chen's support for the Hakka since 2000. Yang stated that DPP-backed Hakka candidates are unlikely to run campaigns exclusively along ethnic lines for fear of alienating potential support from ethnic Taiwanese.

Making Inroads with Aborigines

14. (C) The DPP's outreach efforts to Taiwan's aboriginal peoples have enjoyed less success. Yang highlighted DPP difficulty in penetrating the existing tribal-based grassroots political networks that largely continue to feed into the Pan-Blue camp. Nevertheless, Yang projected that the DPP is sure to pick up one aborigine seat from the plains districts and has a good chance of picking up another seat from the mountain districts. Any gains among the aborigine vote would be a big achievement since the DPP currently has no legislators from the aborigine districts.

But Writing off the Mainlanders, For Now

15. (C) The DPP rhetorical appeal to a more inclusive Taiwan identity and national polity has largely failed to win much

support with the ethnic Mainlander electorate or even among DPP campaign officials. Yang said most of his colleagues planning DPP election strategy do not actively discuss how to win over the ethnic Mainlander vote, which they see as a lost voting block. In many areas, the DPP continues to promote subtle "ethnic Taiwanese-first" themes to draw attention to the Mainlander-dominated leadership of the Pan-Blue. For example, during the presidential campaign many DPP posters urged voters to "elect a Taiwanese (Taiwanren) president," playing on the popular perception that KMT candidate Lien Chan, who was born on the Mainland to a Taiwanese father and Mainland mother, is at best only a "half-Taiwanese." Senior ethnic Taiwanese KMT officials regularly complain to AIT that the DPP is increasingly successful in eroding the KMT's ethnic Taiwanese base. However, many KMT moderates assert that the anti-mainstream policies of the KMT leadership contribute at least as much to this trend as divisive DPP ethnic appeals (Reftel).

16. (C) While the DPP has generally written off Mainlanders for the December election, the party will be sponsoring a series of conferences next year to start a dialogue with ethnic Mainlanders so as to not alienate them permanently from the DPP or marginalize them from participating in the national polity. Yang said he expects President Chen to renew his efforts to appeal to Mainlanders after the December elections. Separately, Taipei County Magistrate Lin Hsi-yao told AIT that the DPP will at least try in the medium term to minimize hostility among ethnic Mainlanders to the ruling party. Lin, a confidante of Presidential Office Secretary General Su Tseng-chang, asserted that Su has already decided that when (and if) he is appointed Premier, he will choose ethnic Mainlander Finance Minister Lin Chuan as his deputy to demonstrate that the DPP is not only a party of and for Taiwanese. Lin's moderate DPP New Tide faction has been particularly aggressive in promoting Mainlander members. The faction's current leader, Tuan I-kang and DPP Deputy Secretary General (and New Tide member) Chung Chia-bing, are

SIPDIS
both ethnic Mainlanders.

Ethnic Politics: The Final Frontier

17. (C) Comment: The DPP's push to win over ethnic minorities is a major change from its past "ethnic Taiwanese-first" focus and a key element of its plan to establish a sustainable ruling base. Minority politics used to be the preserve of the KMT, which effectively used resources and personnel appointments to secure support from aborigine and Hakka communities. As in many other areas, the DPP is taking a page out of the KMT's book, lavishly spending government funds to promote Hakka and aboriginal culture and appointing minorities, like Hakka Vice Premier Yeh Chu-lan, to senior positions in government. While this approach seems to be showing some results, especially with the Hakka community, Mainlanders will remain a hard target. For many Mainlanders, aversion to the DPP is not only a matter of ethnicity but extends to the DPP's core Taiwan-first ideology.
PAAL